

What Is the “Abomination of Desolation”?

Several scriptures refer to it, but do you know what it is? Is it something merely from history—or a soon-coming prophesied event? Prepare for the shocking facts!

BY DAVID C. PACK

MANY KNOW THE term “Abomination of Desolation,” but almost *none* know what it means. Complicating the problem, misguided, deceived—and deceiving—“prophecy watchers” the world over have remained *ignorant* of the TRUTH of what the prophet Daniel called “the abomination that makes desolate.” They neither understand what this is nor the prophetic implications it carries.

What is this “abomination”? Has it already come?—or is it yet to appear? How will we know it when we see it?

The confusion surrounding this prophecy will soon be stripped away—but only if you follow God’s *clues* with an open mind. When fully understood, this prophecy is not only fascinating, but CHILLING! Brace for shocking facts.

Key Scriptures

The first important clue that Jesus gave about the abomination of desolation is found in Luke: “And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the *desolation* thereof is nigh [or near]” (21:20). This verse often causes confusion, with some mistakenly assuming the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies *is* the abomination.

When the verse describes the city being surrounded, it does not say the desolation “has happened,” but that it “is near.” If something *is near*, it *has*

not happened yet. So, the abomination of desolation is NOT Jerusalem being surrounded by armies. These are separate events that occur at different times. Get this clear before continuing!

Matthew’s account reveals more about what to look for: “When you therefore shall *see* the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, *stand* in the holy place, (whoso reads let him *understand*:)...” (24:15).

This verse approaches the subject from a different and slightly *later* point in time than Luke 21, which describes the abomination just *before* its fulfillment. Therefore, Luke 21:20 and Matthew 24:15 are slightly *offset*, as the latter speaks of the period in which God’s people, who are watching for this, “see” it fulfilled.

We have clarified two points: (1) armies around Jerusalem precede the abomination, and (2) this prophecy involves something “stand[ing] in the holy place.” Keep this simple. Do not allow mixed up theories, suppositions and assumptions you might have heard to cloud the plain understanding of what God reveals.

Before reading further, recognize another aspect of the prophecy. In both *Matthew and Mark*, the instruction “...whoso reads, let him *understand*...” is found (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). God inspires this to be recorded *twice* for special emphasis.

Will you accept this instruction for what it so obviously means? God wants you to *understand*. Ignore the ridiculous claims of those who suggest prophecy is sealed—and that, while

God would inspire many prophecies, He does not want them understood. God *does* want His servants to comprehend—to grasp—them!

Mark Reveals More

Mark 13 removes all doubt about the abomination “standing in the holy place”—and whether it is supposed to be there: “But when you shall see the *abomination of desolation*...standing where it *ought not* [meaning, in the “holy place”]...” (vs. 14). Clearly, the abomination is something that does *not* belong in the holy place.

But what exactly *is* this “holy place”? The context in which the term is used makes plain that it is not figurative, but refers to a literal place—a religious site. Recognize, however, that this place cannot be a *pagan* religious site. It must be a location *God* considers or once considered holy, with something foreign and blasphemous placed there. History and other scriptures outside the gospels reveal that this must be an at least partially rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

A significant event for all of God’s people who are watching *follows* the abomination of desolation being set up. This reference is brought from Mark’s account: “...*then* let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains” (vs. 14).

The appearance of the abomination is the signal for God’s people to flee. This makes understanding the prophecy much more crucial.

Another reference to this fleeing is found in Luke’s account. Notice: “And *when* you shall see Jerusalem

compassed with armies, *then* know that the desolation thereof is *near*. *Then* [what happens next] let them which are in Judea *flee* to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written [by the prophets] may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be *great distress* in the land, and *wrath* upon this people [the modern nations of Israel]. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (21:20-24).

The book of Revelation offers a parallel description brought by Christ through John of what happens to Jerusalem. The context is coming directly off of chapter 10, and how the “little book” described there is the book of Ezekiel, as well as a reference in chapter 11, verses 1 and 2, about the “Temple of God” being “measured.”

What follows this “measuring”? Let’s read: “...the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they [the Gentiles] tread under foot *forty and two months*” (11:2). The very next verse continues by introducing the work of the Two Witnesses for this same 42 months (three and a half years)—or “1,260 days,” the term used in Revelation to describe the length of their commission.

It should be obvious that this “treading” by the “Gentiles” in Revelation 11:2 has to be referring to the length of time that Jerusalem is being “trodden down of the Gentiles,” as Luke so similarly put it.

An inset: The faithful people of God’s Church (not those who have grown lukewarm and confused) know that there is more very special (and truly sobering) understanding tied to additional details about what *is* the holy place, what—and also *who*, because it includes a human figure (Dan. 11:45)—it is that stands in this place,

as well as the spiritual implications tied to being on the wrong side of events in Jerusalem when the Temple is measured. (It is not the purpose of this article to cover those details. They are for another place.)

It does need to be at least briefly stated, however, that the “temple” being measured in Revelation 11 is *not* the physical one that the Jews will rebuild. It is speaking of the New Testament Church (or Body of Christ), which is referred to in numerous places by the apostle Paul as the “Temple of the Lord” (I Cor. 3:17; Eph. 2:20-22). The more-than-curious reader will want to at least read these verses for proof of understanding how the *true Church* and the (spiritual) *Temple of the Lord* are synonymous terms in the New Testament.

The seriousness of the events and time periods that follow the setting up of the abomination of desolation should bring a new level of gravity to understanding this prophecy. All who care to escape what is coming—to “flee” at the right moment with the rest of God’s people—must know exactly *what* to watch for.

We have still not answered the question of what the abomination *is*.

An Earlier Type

Now for *another* clue about the abomination. Recall the biblical principle of DUALITY—a former and latter fulfillment—in prophecy. God usually gives a *former* TYPE to help us understand the *latter* fulfillment. The former is not the *primary* fulfillment of a prophecy. It only points to the latter fulfillment, which *is* the main focus and purpose of the prophecy itself.

This duality is seen with the “abomination of desolation” prophecy. And what it reveals is fascinating! Let’s examine the historical TYPE of what has already occurred. First, recall the lengthy Daniel 11 prophecy. A crucial part of that prophecy comes up for review and expansion at this juncture.

In about 176 BC, Antiochus IV (king of the north, and TYPE of the future final civil ruler who embodies

the Beast system) acquired the kingdom from his older brother. After this, Antiochus Epiphanes removed the high priest in Jerusalem and installed someone loyal to himself. Upon a triumphant return from Egypt, in 168 BC, Antiochus sacked the Temple at Jerusalem and took its golden vessels.

Recall that Antiochus also sent troops to Judea in 167 BC. They destroyed the Temple and its sanctuary. This act stopped the commanded twice daily sacrifices at the Temple (Ex. 29:39-42; Num. 28:4-6). This was an overt attempt to wipe out the Jewish religion with all of its doctrines.

This military leader also stationed a garrison atop the Jewish Temple Mount, desecrating it. Also recall that Daniel wrote, “Yes, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him [Antiochus] the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of [the] sanctuary was cast down” (8:11).

Daniel added this in chapter 11: “And arms shall stand on his [Antiochus’] part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength [the Jewish Temple], and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the *abomination that makes desolate*” (vs. 31).

Now then, *what exactly* is this coming “abomination” that will be “set up” again? The truth—born of history—is beyond eye-opening in regard to prophecy.

The first fulfillment was not just Antiochus’ armies coming into Jerusalem—an early “treading it down” for three years until 165 BC—but the fact that those armies set up an IMAGE—a specific IDOL—on the Temple’s altar, which *defiled* and made it *desolate*. Antiochus further polluted the Temple by offering swine’s blood upon the altar.

These historical events of Daniel 8 are an unmistakable fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 11:31, and a FORE-RUNNER of the end-time fulfillment of the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Christ in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

We are left to ask: *What* was this statue and *where* is it now?

Incredible History Unveiled

Now comes fascinating knowledge. You have almost certainly never heard it. History reveals that the idol Antiochus placed in the Temple—or “holy place”—was a statue of Zeus or Jupiter Olympus, the chief deity of pagan Hellenists of Greece and Macedonia.

Volume Four of *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines* makes this clear. The context has to do with Simon (Magus) the sorcerer, described in Acts 8: “When Justin Martyr wrote [AD 152] his *Apology* [his book] the sect of the Simonians [from Simon Magus] appears to have been formidable, for he speaks four times of their founder, Simon [Magus]...and we need not doubt that he identified him with the Simon of the [book of] Acts. He states that he was a Samaritan [Acts 8 makes that clear], adding that his birthplace was a village called Gitta; he describes him as a formidable magician, and tells that he came to Rome in the days of Claudius Caesar [which is AD 45], and made such an impression by his magical powers, that he was honoured as a god, a statue being erected to him on the Tiber [River], between the two bridges, bearing the inscription ‘Simoni deo Sancto’” (p. 682). This inscription means “Holy God Simon.” Also note that Simon’s followers generally called him Jupiter.

We can ask: Is this the very same statue placed by Antiochus?

Following the journey of this statue is vital. Do not miss the flow of events. Remember, God expects they be understood!

Statue Reappears

It has been well reported that many centuries ago a statue of the pagan god Jupiter was found in Rome. The large bronze statue was altered and renamed St. Peter. One strong indication of this comes from John Parker: “... by some writers it is affirmed to be no other than the statue of Jupiter, with a new head and hands; others stating that this famous statue was melted

down by order of Pope Leo I. in the middle of the fifth century, and recast into this figure of S. Peter, holding the keys of heaven with one hand, whilst the other is raised in the act of benediction in the Roman manner, with the first and second fingers extended” (*The Archaeology of Rome*, p. 38).

Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*, goes further: “This statue is looked upon with most profound veneration and its foot has been *kissed* so many times [by devotees] that the toes are nearly worn away!” (It is more than interesting to note that the Catholic religion has a long tradition of kissing idols—feet, rings and crosses—yet the *pagan origin* of this practice can clearly be found in I Kings 19:18 and Hosea 13:1-2.)

Incredible! Yet these are the facts from history. This same statue—directly related to the abomination of desolation—is now prominently displayed in Rome!

Remember, Jesus said His servants—those who understand God’s prophecies and know what to watch for—shall “see” the abomination of desolation. This must be referring to something that is physically set up and visible in the holy place.

Will this statue be brought back, full-circle, to Jerusalem to fulfill this end-time prophecy? God, through the initial fulfillment, has almost certainly provided the answer for those willing to believe His Word and plain accounts of history regarding the role of this image and its connection to the end-time civil ruler (Beast), and the religious leader (False Prophet) who will direct that it be placed—with himself—in Jerusalem.

In Place of God

Ezekiel 28 provides a fuller picture of the *audaciousness* of the False Prophet when he enters Jerusalem: “The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, ‘Son of man, say unto the *prince of Tyrus* [a man, not to be confused with the *king* of Tyrus referenced in verse 12, who is clearly Satan]...Thus says the Lord GOD; because your heart is lifted up, and you

have said, ‘I AM A GOD, I sit in the seat of God, *in the midst of the seas*’ (vs. 1-2).

Daniel 11:45 explains that the king of the north will “plant the tabernacles of his palace *between the seas* in the glorious holy mountain...” Of course, the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea are about equidistant on either side of Jerusalem, east and west. Any map of the Middle East shows this. The False Prophet will obviously participate in this move and join him.

Continuing in Ezekiel 28 about the False Prophet: “Yet you are a man, and *not* God, though you *set your heart as the heart of God*: behold, you are wiser than Daniel [this man will think he is]; there is no secret that they can hide from you [describing his proud thinking]. With your wisdom and with your understanding you have gotten you riches, and have gotten gold and silver into your treasures” (vs. 2-4).

Let’s pause to summarize. A United Europe will transform the crashing global economy and usher in a time of world prosperity unlike any previous time. The False Prophet will proclaim himself to be God. Amazingly, *hundreds of millions* will believe him, having been seduced by accompanying miracles. The world will rejoice and also worship the Beast because he will bring peace and prosperity back to the world.

Verses 5-8 describe more of this religious leader’s pride in the context of what his end will be: “By your great wisdom and traffick have you increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches: therefore thus says the Lord GOD; *because you have set your heart as the heart of God*; behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon you...they shall bring you down to the pit.”

Antiochus Epiphanes was a fore-running TYPE of the False Prophet (but also of the Beast because he too is worshipped).

Future Fulfillment

The ULTIMATE fulfillment of the abomination of desolation is not only the statue, it is the final leader of the re-

ligious system—the human personification of the Babylonish whore herself—who enters into Jerusalem and says, “I am God.”

In fact, the entire *Babylonish system* that this False Prophet—supported by the Beast—represents is *twice* referenced regarding “abominations”: “So he [an angel] carried me [the apostle John] away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of *abominations* and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND *ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*” (Rev. 17:3-5).

God does not just describe this false religious system as abominable, but refers to it as “the *mother* of... abominations.”

This religious leader is described in II Thessalonians and there referred to as the “man of sin.” Notice: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Christ’s Return] shall not come, except there come a *falling away* first [a prophecy fulfilled in the twentieth century] and that *man of sin* be revealed, the *son of perdition*... Who opposes and exalts himself *above all that is called God*, or that is worshipped; so that he *as God* sits in the temple of God, *showing himself that he IS GOD*” (2:3-4).

Verses 9 and 10 explain how this deceiver will sway great numbers to worship him and the civil leader: “Even him, whose coming is after the working of *Satan* with *all power and signs and lying wonders*, and with *all deceivableness* of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they re-

ceived not the love of the *truth*...” The allure of miracles will seduce the masses into supporting and even worshipping the Beast. (See also Revelation 13:11-14 and 19:20.)

This is clearly the False Prophet of Revelation 16:13, *not* the Beast. But do not be confused. They *both* are seen as divine. Remember, Antiochus Epiphanes—the *civil* ruler—as well as the statue—representing the *religious* system of Babylon in Jerusalem—was a *TYPE* of the coming Beast and False Prophet.

True Motivation

What is the *motivation* behind the setting up of the abomination of desolation? Examining a passage in Psalm 83 reveals *why* the Beast power will come against Jerusalem to destroy it and desecrate the Jewish state and religion:

“Come...let us [certain nations acting in alliance] cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have *consulted together* with one consent: they are *confederate* against you [this describes an association of nations in the Middle East who decide to ally with the 10 European nations under the Beast]...Who said, Let us take to ourselves the *houses of God* in possession” (vs. 4-5, 12).

First, it is certainly no secret that forces exist today in the Middle East who want to “cut off” the modern nation of Israel—the Jews. We also read from Luke that this was a time of (Gentile) “wrath” against the “people” of “this land.” Many *other* countries within the “nation” identified here as Israel are also to be included in this destruction that is being planned.

Now focus on the term “houses of God.” We saw that the final powerful religious leader will “plant the tabernacles of his palace *between the seas*

[Mediterranean Sea and Dead Sea] in the glorious holy mountain” (Dan. 11:45). Comparing this passage with Psalm 83 makes clear they describe the same holy places in Jerusalem where the Jews’ daily sacrifices must already by then have been restarted.

So then, the *religious* motive behind the confederation is to wipe out the nations of Israel—and to seize the holy places in Jerusalem, the “houses of God.” And just as Antiochus entered Jerusalem centuries ago, destroyed the city and desecrated the Temple, a final fulfillment of the abomination of desolation is drawing nearer.

Understand. The Vatican has long said they want to proclaim Jerusalem an “international city.” But this seemingly peaceful desire will only be a pretense for taking possession of the city’s holy sites. Realize that this false system will declare, “They are safe with us! You can trust us! We will be the guarantor of Jerusalem—and its three ‘great religions.’ And we are prepared to bring armies *to ensure it*.”

Longing for “Peace in our time”—reminiscent of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s report upon returning from Berlin just before World War II—this will please and reassure the ears of the majority—and the decision makers!

Understand. For the daily sacrifices to *stop* they must first be *restarted*. There must come at least a temporary *restoration* of these Old Covenant sacrifices in Jerusalem at the Temple Mount under the direction of a re-established priesthood. While a full temple is not needed, *something* must be rebuilt.

When the False Prophet directs the Beast to erect this statue at the site of the reconstituted daily sacrifices, the abomination will officially “stand in the holy place”! □

THIS ARTICLE IS PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE AND IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST BY THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD.

It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of the Church and others who have elected to support the work of the Church. Contributions are welcomed and gratefully accepted.

R039 | 110607 | Copyright © 2010 | The Restored Church of God | All Rights Reserved | Printed in the USA

The Restored Church of God, P.O. Box 23295, Wadsworth, OH 44282, USA

The Restored Church of God, P.O. Box 4064, St. Catharines, ON L2R 7S3, CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266 | Fax: (330) 334-6513 | www.thercg.org | info@thercg.org